The Eternal Philosophy of Chaos
by Timothy Leary

For several thousand years it has seemed obvious that the basic nature of the universe is extreme complexity, inexplicable disorder; that mysterious, tangled magnificence popularly known as Chaos. The poetic Hindus believed the universe was a dreamy dance of illusion (maya).

The paradoxical, psycho-logical Buddhists spoke of a void too complex;maybe a trillion times too complex; to be grasped by the human A-B-C-1-2-3 wordprocessing system (mind).

Chinese poet-philosopher Lao Tse sardonically reminded us that the tao is forever changing complexities at light speed, elusive and inaccessible to our fingers and thumbs laboriously tapping letters on our alphanumeric keyboards and mind-operating systems.

Socrates, that proud, self-reliant Athenian democrat, indiscreetly blurted out the dangerous secret when he said, "The aim of human life is to know thy selves. "This is surely the most subversive T-shirt flaunted over the centuries by humanists, the most confrontational bumper sticker on their neuro-auto-mobiles.

Individualistic thinking is the original sin of the Judeo-Christian-lslamic bibles and sabotages attempts by the authorities to order Chaos.

The first rule of every law-and-order system is to trivialize-demonize the dangerous concepts of Self, Individual Aims, and Personal Knowledge. Thinking for Yourselves is heretical, treasonous, blasphemous. Only devils and satans do it. Creative thinking, committed out loud, becomes a capital crime. It was "Three Strikes and You're Out" for several hundred thousand Protestant dissenters during the Inquisitions of the Roman papacy;not to forget the witch burnings performed by the Protestants when they took charge of the Chaos-control department.

It was all very simple to the law-and-order controllers. There are the immortal gods and goddesses up there in that Gated Community on Olympus Drive. And then there is us; meaningless mortals, slaving around down here in the low-rent flatlands.

The concept of individuals with choice and identity seemed total folly, the ultimate nightmare;not just of authoritarian bureaucrats, but of common sense liberals. Chaos must be controlled!

The standard way to tame and domesticate the impossible complexity that surrounds us is to invent a few "tooth-fairy" gods, the more infantile the better, and to lay down a few childish rules: Honor your father and your mother, etc. The rules are simple and logical. You passively obey. You pray. You sacrifice. You work. You believe.

And then, Praise the Bored, let there be no terrorizing notions about individuals hanging around this meaningless, disordered universe trying to figure how to design themselves some individual selves.

Chaos Engineering

The first Chaos engineers may have been the Hindu sages who designed a method for operating the brain, called yoga. The Buddhists produced one of the great hands-on do-it-

yourself manuals for operating the brain: The Tibetan Book of the Dying. Chinese Taoists developed the teaching of going with the flow; not clinging to idea-structures, but changing and evolving.

The message was: Be cool. Don't panic. Chaos is good. Chaos creates infinite possibilities.

The wacko Socratic idea of Do It Yourself (D.I.Y.), which created modern democracy, was a practical, common sense, sassy Athenian version of the Hindu-Buddhist-Taoist yogas. And remember where this foolishness got India, Tibet, and China ? Know Where!

The most dangerous idea is this crazed, megalomaniac notion of KNOW !

which defines the serf-human being as a thinker. Outrageous impudence ! The slave is encouraged to become a philosopher. The serf strives to be a psychologist. A potential yogic sage!

This heresy predicts why later atheist evolutionists like Linnaeus and Darwin defined our superchimp species as Femina (Homo) Sapiens Sapiens.

The Chaos Without

For centuries there existed a fanatic taboo against scientific understanding. Why ? Because of the fear of Chaos. The facts about our (apparently) insignificant place in the galactic dance are so insulting to the control freaks who try (so manfully and diligently and seriously) to manage Chaos that they forbade any intelligent attempts to look out there and dig the glorious complexity.

At one point consciousness-altering devices like the microscope and telescope were criminalized for exactly the same reasons that psychedelic plants were banned in later years. They allow us to peer into bits and zones of Chaos.

Galileo got busted and Bruno was burned at the stake for showing that the Sun did not circle the Earth. Religious and political Chaos-phobes naturally want the nice, tidy, comfy universe to cuddle around them.

In the last century science has developed technical extensions of the human sensorium that specify the truly spooky nature of the complexities we inhabit.

Stellar astronomy describes a universe of fantastic multiplicity: a hundred billion tiny star systems in our tiny galaxy, a hundred billion galaxies in our teeny universe.

The Chaos Within

In the last decades of the twentieth century, scientists began to study the complexity within the human brain.

Talk about Chaos ! It turns out that the brain is a galactic network of a hundred billion neurons. Each neuron is an information system as complex as a mainframe computer. Each neuron is connected to ten thousand other neurons. Each of us is equipped with a universe of neurocomplexity that is inscrutable to our alphanumeric minds.

This brain power is at once the most humiliating fact about our current ignorance, and the most thrilling prospect of our potential divinity; once we start learning how to operate our brains.

Humanism: The Navigational Game Plan

Chaos theory allows us to appreciate our assignment: the understanding, enjoyment, and celebration of the delightful nature of the whole universe; including the totally mad paradoxes within our brains.

Activating the so-called right brain eliminates one of the last taboos against understanding Chaos and provides a hands-on scientific basis for the philosophy of Humanism; encouraging us to team up with others to design our own personal versions of Chaos.

For the last few months I have been obsessed by the extreme complexity of everything. I cannot answer any simple question in an interview or write a page about abstract issues without revising in great detail my current viewpoints about human evolution and so on.

We don't know who, why, where, what, when we are. What a fright-mare! Ignorant, alienated agents sent on a mission with no instructions. My thrilling bewilderment about the Great Disorder (Chaos) is due, of course, to the state of senility that I have diligently earned.

Short-term memory loss means you forget exactly what's happening and why you are here. Long-term memory gain gives you the ambiguous perspective of what our cultures have come up with in the way of weird solutions to the Mystery.

What I'm talking about is Designing Chaos and Fashioning Your Personal Disorders

On Screens

With Cybernetic Tools

From Countercultural Perspectives

With Informational Chemicals (Chaos Drugs)

While DeLighting in CybErotics

As Guerrilla Artists

To Explore De-Animation Alternatives

While Surfing the Waves of Millennium Madness

to glimpse the glorious wild impossibilities and improbabilities of the century to come.

Enjoy it ! It's ours to be played with.

High-Tech Paganism

The Cyberpunk as Modern Alchemist The baby-boom generation grew up in an electronic world (1960s to 1970s) of turn-on, tune-in television and personal computing screens. The cyberpunks, growing up in the 1980s to 1990s, develop new metaphors, rituals, lifestyles for dealing with the universe of information. More and more of us are becoming fuzzy logic shamans and digital alchemists.

The parallels between the culture of the alchemists and that of cyberpunk computer adepts are numerous. Both employ knowledge of an occult arcanum unknown to the population at large, with secret symbols and words of power. The "secret symbols" compose the languages of computers and mathematics, and the "words of power" instruct computer operating systems to complete Herculean tasks.

Knowing the precise code name of a digital program permits it to be conjured into existence, transcending the labor of muscular or mechanical search. Rites of initiation or apprenticeship are common to both. "Psychic feats" of telepresence and action-at-a-distance are achieved by selection of the menu option.

Young digital alchemists have at their command tools of a clarity and power unimagined by their predecessors. Computer screens are magical mirrors, presenting alternate realities at varying degrees of abstraction on command (invocation). The mouse or pen of the digitizing tablet is the wand, controlling the fire of the CRT/monitor display and harnessing the creative force of the operator. Spinning disk drives are the pentacles, inscribed with complex symbols, earthen tablets to receive the input of "air", resulting in the crackling intellectual electricity of the processor chip circuitry programming. The RAM chips are, literally, the buffers ("buffer pools"), the water, the passive element capable only of receiving impressions and retransmitting, reflecting.

Iconic visual programming languages are a Tarot, the pictorial summarization of all possibilities, activated for divination by juxtaposition and mutual influence. It is a Periodic Table of Possibilities, the Western form of the Eastern I Ching. Traditional word-oriented programming languages; FORTRAN, COBOL, and the rest;are a degenerate primitive form of these universal systems, grimoires of profit-oriented corporations.

Detailed database logs of the activity of operating systems form the Akashic records on a microscale. At a macroscopic level, this is the "world net" knowledge base, the worldwide online hypertext network of information soon to be realized by the storage capacity of CD-ROM and the data-transmission capability of optical fiber;William Gibson's cyberspace "matrix".

Personal transmutation (the ecstasy of the "ultimate hack") is a veiled goal of both systems. The satori of harmonious human-computer communication resulting from the infinite regress into metalevels of self-reflection is the reward for immaculate conceptualization and execution of ideas.

The universality of 0 and 1 throughout magic and religion;yin and yang, yoni and lingam, cup and wand;are manifested today in digital signals, the two bits underlying the implementation of all digital programs in the world in our brains and in our operating disks. Stretching it a bit, even the monad, symbol of change and the Tao, visually resembles a superimposed 0 and 1 when its curving central line is stretched through the action of centrifugal force from the ever-increasing speed of rotation of the monad.

Cyberreligion of the Baby Boomers

By the year 2000 the concerns of the baby-boom generation will be digital or (to use the old paradigms) philosophic-spiritual.

During their teens the Boomers went on an adolescent spiritual binge unequalled since the Children's Crusade. In their revolt against the factory culture, they reinvented and updated their tribal-pagan roots and experimented with Hinduism, Buddhism, American Indianism, Magic, Witchcraft, Ann Arbor Voodoo, Esalen Yoga, I Ching, Taoism, Exorcism of the Pentagon, 3-D Re-Incarnations, Love-Ins, and Psychedelic Celebrations.

This generation, we recall, was disillusioned by the religions, politics, economics of their parents. Growing up with the threat of nuclear war, the assassination of beloved leaders; a collapsing industrial system; an impossible national debt; religious fundamentalisms (Christian-JewishIslamic), which fanatically scream hatred and intolerance; acquired immune deficiencies; and uncomprehending neglect of the ecology, they have developed a healthy skepticism about collective solutions.

No wonder the baby-boom generation has created a psychology of individual navigation. Singularity. The basic idea is self-responsibility. You just can't depend upon anyone else to solve your problems. You gotta do it all by yourself... with a little help from your friends.

A Do-It-Yourself Religion

Since God #I appears to be held hostage back there by the bloodthirsty Persian Ayatollah, by the telegenic Polish Pope, and the Moral Majority, there's only one logical alternative. You "steer" your own course. You and your dear friends start your own religion. The Temple, of course, is your body. Your minds write the theology. And the Holy Spirit emanates from that infinitely mysterious intersection between your brain and the brains of your crew.

The attainment of even the suburbs of Paradise involves good navigation and planning on your part. Hell is a series of redeemable errors. A detour caused by failure to check the trip maps. A losing streak.

Reward yourself for making choices that lead to friendship and pleasure. Build a cybernetic cycle of positive feedback. Only from a state of free selfhood can any truly compassionate signals be sent to others.

The Administration of a Personal State

The management and piloting of a singularity leads to a very busy career. Once the individual has established herself as a religion, a country, a corporation, an information network, and a neurological universe, it is necessary to maintain personal equivalents of all the departments and operations of the bureaucracies that perform these duties.

This means forming private alliances; formulating personal political platforms; conducting one's own domestic and foreign relations; establishing trade policies, defense and security programs, educational and recreational events.

On the upside, one is free from dependence on bureaucracies, an inestimable boon. (Free agents can, of course, make temporary deals with organizations and officials thereof.) And if countries have histories and mythic origins, why shouldn't you ?

The Personal Mythology

Search and research your very own genetic memory banks, the Old Testaments of your DNA-RNA, including, if you like, past incarnations, Jungian archetypes, and funky preincarnations in any future you can imagine. Write your very own Newest Testament, remembering that voluntary martyrdom is tacky, and crucifixions, like nuclear war, can ruin your day.

You and your friends can do anything that the great religions and empires and racial groups have done in the name of their god. And you're certain to do it better becauseÆ£ well, look at their track records. There's no way your Personal State could produce the persecutions and massacres and bigotries of the past and present. There's only one of you, and even with the help of your friends the amount of damage individuals can do is insignificant compared with that of a collective.

Besides, you're children of the sixties and nineties. You're imprinted to want a peaceful, tolerant, funny world. You can choose your gods to be smart, funny compassionate, cute, and goofy.

"Irreverence" Is a Password for the Twenty-First Century

Human society has now reached a turning point in the operation of the digital programs of evolution, a point at which the next evolutionary steps of the species become apparent to us, to surf at will.

In the near future, the methods of information technology, molecular engineering, biotechnology, nanotechnology (atom stacking), and quantum-digital programming could make the human form a matter totally determined by individual whim, style, and seasonal choice.

The sanctity of our body image, along with the irrational taboos about sex and death, seems to be one of the most persistent anachronisms of industrial-age thought. The human being of the future may be a biocomputer hybrid of any desired form, or an "electronic entity" in the digital info-universe.

Human as program. Or human in programs.

The electronic life form of "human in programs" is more alien to our current concepts of humanity. Through storage of one's belief systems as data structures online, and driven by desired programs, one's neuronal apparatus could operate in silicon basically as it did in the meatware of the brain, though faster, more predictably, more self-mutably, and, if desired, immortally.

Intelligent posthumanists will not only store themselves electronically, but may do so in the form of a "computer virus," capable of traversing computer networks and of self-replication as a guard against accidental or malicious erasure.

"What's on this CD ?"

"Ah, that's just boring, adolescent Leary. Let's go ahead and reformat it."

One speculation is that such viral human forms might already inhabit our computer systems. Cleverly designed, they would be very difficult if not theoretically impossible to detect. Current programs do not permit matching the real-time operation speed and parallel complexity of conventional brains. But time scale of operation is subjective and irrelevant, except for the purposes of interface.

Of course, there is no reason to restrict one's manifestation to a particular form. With ever-loosening physical constraints (through perhaps inescapable economic constraints), one will be able to assume any desired form.

Given the ease of copying computer-stored information, it should be possible to exist simultaneously in many forms. Running independently and cloned at each branch point, intelligence would persist in each of these forms. Where the "I's" are in this situation is a matter for high-tech pagans and digital philosophers.
by Timothy Leary from Chaos and Cyberculture.